

Russian files on Oswald may hold clues to killing of JFK

By Ben Fenton in Washington

SECRET Russian documents on the assassination of President John F Kennedy could provide vital evidence about the state of mind and intentions of the presumed assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, an expert said yesterday.

President Yeltsin handed the 80 files to President Clinton at the G8 summit in Cologne on Sunday.

The Russian leader said that several years ago he had ordered Russia's intelligence agencies to examine their files on the murder of Mr Kennedy in Dallas in November 1963 and prepare the material for release.

Prof Robert Blakey, the chief investigator for the House of Representatives Select Committee on Assassinations, told *The Daily Telegraph* yesterday that the documents could be of great value, but may prove worthless.

"The key question that they could answer is about Oswald's intentions in the months immediately before the assassination," said Prof Blakey, of the University of Notre Dame in Indiana.

"In late September 1963, Oswald went into the Cuban and Russian embassies in Mexico City and, according to intelligence reports available to our committee, told the Cubans he was going to shoot the President and wanted to be allowed to escape to Havana afterwards.

"The Cubans denied this to the committee, but the uncensored reports of the traffic between the embassies and Moscow before the assassina-

tion and immediately afterwards might well confirm our intelligence."

He said the other information that might come out of Russia would be about Oswald's stay in Minsk, in what is now Belarus, between 1959 and 1962.

"He was subject to electronic surveillance by the KGB ... and there must somewhere, at some time, have been transcripts of those recordings. They would be fascinating as a psychological profile of the man at the time.

"All we really know is that on the basis of their surveillance of him, the KGB decided that Oswald was psychologically unstable and they would not recruit him.

"But that information would probably be in the hands of the Belarus government rather than the Russian and I don't know if Mr Yeltsin would be able to hand that over," Prof Blakey added.

He doubted the Russians had any material that would change the consensus among historians of the assassination — that Oswald killed the President but there is some evidence of a conspiracy involving the Mafia and a second gunman.

The handover of the papers was part of a post-Kosovo thawing of relations between Moscow and Washington in Cologne, but surprised administration officials.

Lee Harvey Oswald defected to the Soviet Union in 1959 aged 19 after becoming disenchanted by the American political system.